

April 11, 2017

Subject: Urban Growth and Conservation

Reporting Period: December 2016 – March 2017

Staff Lead: Emily Tibbott, Strategic Growth Council

Recommended Action:

For information only – no action required.

Background:

Along the High Speed Rail corridor, 24 station areas are envisioned, some in major population centers and others in more rural contexts, particularly the Central Valley. These stations will have significant impacts on their surrounding communities as well as implications for how these communities grow. Each station area has or will receive a grant from the High Speed Rail Authority to assist with elements such as station siting, design, retail development, housing, and other land use considerations, with a principal focus on the area within a half-mile radius of the station. Stations are expected to bring economic opportunity and vitality, facilitate multi-modal transportation options, and encourage transit-oriented and compact development. While planning effectively for downtown development is critical to high speed rail success, an explicit focus on protection of the open space and agricultural lands values that in many cases provide the backdrop for these communities is equally important.

The Urban Growth and Conservation (UGC) Program, an initiative of the Strategic Growth Council, aims to help high speed rail station area geographies plan sustainably for the growth anticipated with the advent of the train. The Program goal is to assist station area communities in rural settings to protect urban open space values, as well as implement mechanisms for more efficient growth such that adjacent farm and ranch lands are protected, with an initial focus on the City of Gilroy. Further, UGC includes a focus on State-level policy and programmatic activities that support and reinforce local efforts. In Gilroy, staff intend to work in tandem with the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which has recently launched the Best Practices Pilot Program (BP3), aiming to bring resources and technical guidance to jurisdictions interested to pilot best practices for strengthening community resiliency to climate change.

Update:

SGC Support for SPUR Report Development

SGC staff is following the activities of the newly launched High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) Board Transit and Land Use (TLU) Committee, to help identify and promote good planning around station areas. SPUR, a Bay Area urban planning think tank, under a contract with HSRA, presented recommendations to the Committee for intermediate station area cities on issues from economic revitalization to more efficient regional growth patterns; Gilroy is among them. Given that these themes are a focus of our involvement with the City, SGC is contributing to SPUR's report, which is due out this summer. Once the report is final, SGC staff anticipates working with the TLU Committee to realize some of these recommendations, some of which may result in policy proposals at the State level.

Statewide Resource on Growth Management Tools

Additional efforts include progress on the SGC/OPR collaboration to develop a statewide resource document focused on growth management tools. Specifically, California Local Area Formation Commission (CaLAFCO) has agreed to a partnership in development of the document, and we have held our first working group meeting to review project scope. Completion of this resource document is planned for this summer. Coincidentally, CaLAFCO is also collaborating with the American Farmland Trust to develop a guidance document on tools for agricultural lands protection; we see this as a fitting companion to SGC's work, and are timing our release to match the release of that document.

Support for Gilroy Planning Processes

SGC leadership traveled to Gilroy in March to meet with elected officials, including the Mayor, as well as leaders in the business community, to discuss ways in which the State might support more efficient local growth. As a next step, SGC staff is organizing a workshop in Gilroy on the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation programs in late April. Further, there are at least two concurrent planning efforts underway as depicted below, which afford the opportunity for integrating efforts; importantly, the general plan update process provides the chance to consider the implications of the HSR station area plan on the city as a whole. In this context, SGC is exploring the potential to support the City in their general plan update process through the use of UrbanFootprint.

City of Gilroy Planning Efforts:

Process	Lead	2017	2018	2019
General Plan Update (GPU) (initiated 2013)	City of Gilroy (Consultant: MintierHarnish)	<i>May</i> – City restarts GPU and CEQA process (following voter approval of UGB)	<i>October</i> – Complete GPU	<i>October</i> – Adoption of GPU
Process	Lead	2017	2018	2019
HSR Station Area Plan for downtown station location (initiated 2015)	City of Gilroy (Consultant: PlaceWorks)	<i>January</i> – City Council presented with draft preferred land use/circulation alternative for downtown station <i>May</i> – City Council reviews two station areas for possible modification of earlier recommended downtown option <i>Later this year</i> – City Council considers approval of downtown station area plan OR re-opens station area planning focus		Initiate station area plan implementation